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The
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THE BEGINNINGS OF THE STANDING ARMY IN
PRUSSIA¹

NO factor has been more fateful, both for good and evil, in the history of modern Germany, than the Prussian army. Its development runs parallel, step by step, with the development of the Prussian state, of which it is both a cause and a result. In its history there are two decisive epochs. The first is the establishment and maintenance by the Great Elector of a *miles perpetuus*, or "standing army". This was a permanent, active field army kept on foot in time of peace as well as war, and was composed of well-disciplined and well-trained professional, paid soldiers in the direct service and control of the sovereign. Being an army of paid professionals, as distinct from a civilian militia, it was necessarily limited in numbers by the revenues available for its support, and was in fact relatively small in comparison with the total population—a great contrast to modern armies based on the principle of universal military service. It may be compared in many respects with the English army of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or with the regular army of the United States. It was the outgrowth of the danger threatening Prussia from the aggressive plans of Charles Gustavus of Sweden during the first Northern War.

The second decisive epoch was the great liberalizing and nationalizing reform movement of Stein and Scharnhorst at the opening of the nineteenth century, which resulted in the establishment of a national Prussian army based on the principle of universal military service. It was the outgrowth of Napoleon's conquest of Prussia and of his boomerang-like decree which attempted to limit the Prussian army to 42,000 men. It needs no discussion here, not only because of the admirable account of it which Professor Ford gave

¹ A paper read at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Cincinnati, December 29, 1916.

to the Association at Chicago two years ago,² but also because its main features have become familiar through their adoption by the other great countries of Europe.

It is of the first of these epochs, the establishment of the standing army in the seventeenth century, that I wish to speak.³

On that cold December morning at Königsberg in 1640 what was the situation which faced the inexperienced youth of twenty whom the world was to know as the Great Elector of Brandenburg, as he stood alone beside his father's coffin? By the death of feeble old George William, young Frederick William inherited in North Germany three groups of widely separated territories. In the centre, mainly between the Elbe and the Oder, was the Electorate of Bran-

² "Boyen's Military Law", *American Historical Review*, XX. 528-538 (April, 1915).

³ In the pages which follow I have drawn my material chiefly from the three great collections of printed sources which deal with the Great Elector's foreign and domestic policy. Chr. Otto Mylius, *Corpus Constitutionum Marchicarum* (Berlin and Halle, 1736 ff., 6 vols. in folio), gives most of the edicts organizing the army and imposing the taxes by which it was largely supported. The *Urkunden und Actenstücke zur Geschichte des Kurfürsten Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg* (Berlin, 1864-1913, 21 vols.) may be depended upon for the details of foreign policy, for negotiations for military subsidies, and for the constitutional conflict with the Estates; vol. V. dealing with the Estates of Cleves-Mark, vol. X. with those of Brandenburg, and vols. XV.-XVI. with those of East Prussia. The *Protokolle und Relationen des Brandenburgischen Geheimen Rates aus der Zeit des Kurfürsten Friedrich Wilhelm* (ed. O. Meinardus, Leipzig, 1889-1907, 5 vols.; printed in *Publ. aus dem Kgl. Preuss. Staatsarchiven*, vols. XLI., LIV., LV., LXVI, LXXX.) lays bare the intimate confidential Privy Council meetings, where reports from officials were read and policies formed; these Privy Council records have been published only for the period 1640-1660.

Among the secondary works, aside from the well-known general histories of Prussia by Droysen and by Prutz, and the good biographies of the Great Elector by Orlich, Philippson, and Waddington, the following studies throw much light on the beginnings of the standing army: F. von Schrötter, *Die Brandenburg-Preussische Heeresverfassung unter dem Grossen Kurfürsten* (Leipzig, 1892, in Schmoller's *Staats- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungen*), on the organization of the army; G. A. von Mülverstedt, *Die Brandenburgische Kriegsmacht unter dem Grossen Kurfürsten* (Magdeburg, 1888), on the origin and history of individual regiments. C. Jany, *Die Anfänge der Alten Armee*, and *Die Alte Armee, 1655-1740* (Berlin, 1901-1905; in *Urkundliche Beiträge und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Preussischen Heeres*, Heft I., VII.), based on figures returned to the War Department, are valuable for their details as to the numbers of the army. F. Wolters, *Die Zentralverwaltung des Heeres und der Steuern* (Munich and Leipzig, 1915), is a good account of the administrative machinery gradually formed to provide financial support for the army. See also F. Hirsch, "Die Armee des Grossen Kurfürsten und ihre Unterhaltung, 1660-1666", in *Hist. Zeitschrift*, LIII. 229-275 (1885); and K. Breysig, "Der Brand. Staatshaushalt in der Zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhundert", in Schmoller's *Jahrbuch*, XVI. 449-526 (1892), for other financial details.

denburg with an area and population, at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, roughly equal to that of the present state of Vermont—approximately 10,000 square miles, with a population of 350,000. But by 1640 rather more than half the people had disappeared through emigration, starvation, suicide, murder, or other violent death due to the terrible effects of the war.⁴ To the east, along the bleak shores of the Baltic lay the slightly smaller duchy of East Prussia; and in the west, in the pleasant valley of the Rhine, the very much smaller Cleves-Mark territories.

Each of these three territories had been overrun and desolated during the Thirty Years' War by a frightfulness beyond description. Each of them in 1640 was in part still occupied and oppressed by foreign military forces which steadily refused to withdraw—the Swedes were encamped in northern Brandenburg, the Poles had seized part of East Prussia, and the Dutch had occupied fortresses in Cleves. But the foreign foe was not the only difficulty with which this youth of twenty had to contend. In each of these three territories the real political power was in the hands not of the ruler, but of the local Estates. These were composed of the privileged feudal nobility and the selfish burgher aristocracy. In each territory these Estates thought only of their own local interests and class privileges. They refused to raise any taxes except such as would be spent for local purposes under their own local control. They refused to raise troops for any purposes except local defense. They refused to recognize as officials of the Elector all persons who did not belong to the native-born of the territory; that is, the Estates of East Prussia declined to recognize any official whom the Elector might wish to appoint from Brandenburg or Cleves, and the Estates of Cleves reciprocated by refusing to tolerate any official who had been so unfortunate as to have been born anywhere else in the world except in Cleves.⁵ In short the Estates of each of the Great Elector's three territories regarded his other lands as foreign soil, in whose welfare and defense they themselves had no particular interest or responsibility. Yet each territory was so isolated geographically and so surrounded by grasping neighbors that it could not defend its own

⁴ Meinardus (*Prot. u. Rel.*, II. cxx-cxlii) gives valuable statistics from which he concludes that nearly three-fourths of the population had been exterminated. But more recent detailed studies indicate that the depopulation of Brandenburg was nearer three-fifths than three-fourths. Cf. F. Kaphahn, *Die Wirtschaftlichen Folgen des 30 Jährigen Krieges für die Altmark* (Gotha, 1911).

⁵ For vociferous denunciations of the Elector's attempts to override this "right of the native-born" (*Indigenatsrecht*) see *Urk. u. Act.*, V. 144, 315; XV. 243, 402.

independence unaided. It was the Great Elector's most important accomplishment that he created in each of these territories a common sense of responsibility and a common habit of action under his own unifying influence. The bundle of isolated territories which he inherited from his father he welded together into a strong, centralized, and absolutistic state. And one of the chief forces by which this welding process was accomplished was the new standing army.

The military situation in the Electorate of Brandenburg was one of the first questions with which the Great Elector had to deal. Shortly before his accession his father's minister, Schwarzenberg, had made a desperate effort to recruit 25,000 mercenaries in the name of the Emperor and the Elector, with which to drive out the Swedes. But the force which Schwarzenberg actually got together numbered scarcely 5000, and represented the worst scum of the earth. They were recruited under the old regimental mercenary system, in which the colonel received a lump sum for raising and equipping a regiment, which he regarded as his own private property. Naturally it was to the colonel's interest to keep as few soldiers as possible actually on foot, because he would otherwise be at the expense of feeding and paying them. Only when they were mustered for review by the prince who was paying for them would the colonel make a frantic attempt to show a full regiment. Usually he did so only by resorting to devious frauds, such as making the same soldier pass in review several times, borrowing soldiers temporarily from brother colonels, or enrolling ruffians and hangers-on hastily gathered at the moment. For instance, in this army of Schwarzenberg's, Colonel Klitzing had received 40,000 Thalers for supposedly 2200 soldiers; he had actually on foot less than a hundred. Colonel Kehrberg received pay for a regiment of 1200, but had only eighty. And so it went. Moreover, this pitiful little army of Schwarzenberg's was too small to expel the Swedes and too defiant and too disorderly to be of any real benefit to the Elector. One of the colonels allowed his soldiers so to riot before Schwarzenberg's house in Berlin, demanding more pay, that the terrified man was literally frightened to death. Another flatly refused to obey the Great Elector's orders. A third browbeat the pastor and citizens of Spandau and defiantly threatened to blow up the fortress and set fire to the town which he was paid to protect. He was as tyrannical over his soldiers as over the cowering civil population. For small offenses he had beaten them, branded them, sliced off their ears and noses, and compelled them to endure the torture of running the gauntlet. The population of Brandenburg complained bitterly that

the soldier within the gates was far more terrible than the Swede without. They begged the Elector to disband the unruly *soldateska*.⁶ And the Elector himself summed up the situation in April, 1641, by writing:

We find that our military forces have cost the country a great deal and done much wanton damage. The enemy could not have done worse. We do not see that we have had, or are likely to have, the least benefit from their services. Therefore we have resolved to keep only what is necessary as a garrison for our fortresses.

He therefore speedily made a truce with the Swedes, and thereupon began the disbandment of this old, disorderly army of regimental mercenaries which he had inherited. By a reduction of the infantry from thirty-nine to sixteen companies it was possible to dismiss a great many officers, who were the most insolent, the most hated, and the most expensive part of the army. From the men in the ranks were dropped the undesirable and the unfit. Conrad von Burgsdorf, for instance, purged his regiment of thirty-three native-born Swedes, thirty-two Scottish, Irish, and Polish adventurers, and thirty men "crooked, lame and useless".⁷

Those who were retained in service numbered scarcely enough to man the garrisons, but they formed a tiny nucleus for a new and relatively well-disciplined army. It was composed so far as possible of the Great Elector's own subjects, so that it might have a little feeling that it was fighting for the defense of home and country. It was sufficiently well paid so that it did not have to resort to the plunder and oppression of the people whom it was supposed to defend. Though it had to protect the scattered fortresses in all the Elector's lands it numbered less than 3000 men for several years, because none of the Estates would consent to raise money for the support of any larger force, and the Elector had as yet almost no other revenues of his own available for military purposes. In the last years of the Thirty Years' War, to be sure, he managed to increase his army to nearly 8000 men. It was a decisive factor in winning for him respectful consideration in the negotiations leading up to the peace of Westphalia, and in assisting him to make good his claims to the new territories of East Pomerania, Magdeburg, Halberstadt, and Minden.

This little force of 8000 men, which was the outgrowth of the last years of the Thirty Years' War, has been spoken of by nearly all writers on Prussian history as the beginning of the standing

⁶ *Urk. u. Act.*, I. 388 ff., 122-454; X. 59-92; *Prot. u. Rel.*, I. 79, 159-237.

⁷ *Prot. u. Rel.*, I. 342.

army. But a closer examination of the situation after the peace of Westphalia does not support this view. After the provisions of the great peace had been carried out in 1650, and after the failure of the Great Elector's ill-starred attack on the Duke of Neuburg in 1651, commonly known as the "cow war at Düsseldorf", he was again forced to follow the example of all his predecessors and most of his contemporaries in disbanding his army as soon as the war was over. He was forced to do so both by the insistence of his Estates and more especially by his lack of any resources of his own with which to support any considerable body of troops. He had not yet created a military revenue which would allow him to keep on foot in time of peace troops which had been raised in time of war. All that he could afford to retain, aside from his modest military escort of 63 horse guards and 202 life guards, were the troops absolutely necessary to garrison the fortresses—790 men in the East Prussian seaports of Pillau and Memel, 596 in Colberg in Pomerania, 1352 in the Brandenburg strongholds, and small bodies of soldiers in the fortresses of the other provinces. Altogether the total garrison forces amounted to a Lilliputian army of just 3907 men.⁸ This handful of men could not have been spared from the fortresses in case of war. It was in no true sense a standing army, *i. e.*, a permanent active field army, with an assured means of support, kept on foot in times of peace as well as of war. The true beginnings of the Prussian standing army are to be found, not in the Thirty Years' War, but half a dozen years later in connection with the Northern War, 1655–1660.

There is another mistake, also, which is common to most Prussian writers, who wish to attribute to the Great Elector a greater vision of the future than he actually enjoyed. It is the mistake of saying that he deliberately planned to create a standing army in the interests of centralization of power and absolutism. He did not do so. His first measures, when the Northern War became imminent, show that he did not intend to recruit a permanent army, but only the customary temporary force to be kept on foot during the continuance of danger.⁹ In the matter of the standing army, as in so many other matters, he showed himself, like Bismarck, to be a successful opportunist. He did not create a situation; but when circumstances presented a situation which to ordinary minds contained nothing but misfortune and evil, the Great Elector saw and seized an opportunity to be turned to his advantage. The Northern War

⁸ Jany, I. 84–114.

⁹ Orders for a provisional "militia in waiting", October 20, 1654. *Prot. u. Rel.*, IV. 594–599.

was such an opportunity. Through its unavoidable necessities he created in time of war a standing army which he and his successors never wholly disbanded in time of peace.

On a day in late summer in 1654 a sly Swedish envoy, Count Schlippenbach, appeared in Berlin with the ostensible purpose of notifying the Great Elector of Queen Christina's abdication, and of the accession of Charles Gustavus. He made liberal profession in public of the new Swedish king's friendly intentions toward the Empire. In private, however, he let drop the ominous warning that Sweden might be compelled by necessity to enter upon a new war against Poland. He hinted at the desirability of an alliance between Sweden and Brandenburg. He even suggested as the basis of such an alliance that the Great Elector should hand over to the Swedes the Prussian ports of Pillau and Memel, and receive in exchange wide lands to be conquered from the unsuspecting Poles. In saying this the unwary envoy let the cat out of the bag.¹⁰ Frederick William instantly saw the direction in which the greedy Swedish eyes were turned. Pillau and Memel were his two strongest fortresses and, next to Königsberg, the two most active trading ports in all East Prussia. They were two of the brightest jewels among his possessions. Under no conditions, he replied, could he entrust them into the hands of the Swedes. With characteristic energy and foresight he at once despatched General Sparr to East Prussia to strengthen the fortifications, and began to take steps that he might not be caught unprepared between the Swedish and Polish belligerents.¹¹

At this critical moment of an impending war between his two Swedish and Polish neighbors, the Great Elector had for the defense of his neutrality and his lands nothing but the handful of garrison troops, scattered, as we have seen, among his isolated fortresses. How should he form an army to meet the threatened danger? He considered various possibilities. In the first place he might in theory call upon all his subjects to stand forth as a militia to defend the land in time of danger. But in practice this *Landfolge*, or general militia levy, had become obsolete and impracticable even before the Thirty Years' War. The peasants were not provided with any sort

¹⁰ Schlippenbach visited Berlin twice, the first time publicly, in August or September, 1654 (*Urk. u. Act.*, VI. 615-616), the second time incognito, in July, 1655 (*ibid.*, VII. 387-395). Most writers, following Pufendorf, have confused these visits.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, VII. 326-330, 337-359. "If his Electoral Highness is armed, the desire to breakfast upon him will pass", remarked his leading minister, Waldeck, *ibid.*, p. 327.

of satisfactory arms; they knew little of fighting or discipline; and they could not be well spared from tilling the land. After the terrible ruin of the Thirty Years' War, when the tillers of the soil had disappeared in such great numbers and it was of first importance to restore some prosperity to agriculture, it would have been particularly unwise to call the peasants from the fields to undergo the burden of military service.

There was also in theory the medieval feudal service which the Elector might demand of his vassals. But this feudal force likewise had fallen into utter decay.¹² It would have been too grotesque in the seventeenth century. The Elector did not forget, however, that theoretically feudal service was still owing to him, and he several times exacted a money payment in lieu of it, and then used the money in payment of his regular standing army.¹³

In his need for troops, as the Northern War grew more threatening, he finally decided to turn to a committee of the Brandenburg Estates and ask for a grant of money sufficient to recruit, equip, and maintain 3000 new troops. To strengthen his request he called attention to a recent decree of the Imperial Diet, which allowed any prince to proceed by military execution against subjects who refused to contribute to the defense of the Empire. Though his language was conciliatory, it was firm, and left no doubt that he intended to act on the principle, "that the military force of a country must be organized in accordance with the danger and necessity".¹⁴ In other words, necessity knows no law, *Not kennt kein gebot*, and he himself of course was to be the judge of the necessity. The Estates shrewdly pointed out, what appears to be the fact, that the Imperial Decree cited did not technically apply in this case, for it was East Prussia, not Brandenburg, which was in danger from the Northern War, and East Prussia, strictly speaking, was not a part of the Empire. Moreover, the Brandenburg Estates took the attitude that they were under no obligation to defend East Prussia. Let East Prussia look after its own safety. However, after delay and haggling, they consented to provide small sums for raising a part of the foot-soldiers that the Elector requested.¹⁵ In July the advancing tide of war

¹² Cf. C. Jany, "Lehndienst und Landfolge unter dem Grossen Kurfürsten", in *Forschungen zur Brand.-Preuss. Geschichte*, VIII. 419-467 (1895).

¹³ Resolution of December 18, 1656, *Urk. u. Act.*, V. 227; edict of October 2, 1663, Mylius, III. ii, no. 36.

¹⁴ "Doch müsste die Kriegsverfassung eines Landes nach der Gefahr und Nothwendigkeit eingerichtet werden." Frederick William to the Brandenburg Estates, December 23, 1654, *Urk. u. Act.*, X. 313.

¹⁵ Recess of March 3, 1655. *Ibid.*, X. 315.

and "necessity" compelled him to request urgently the equipment of 3000 additional men. In words which foreshadowed his future attitude he declared to them on July 12, 1655:

The military preparations of all our neighbors compel us to follow their example. And since this army is for the benefit not simply of one, but of all my lands, I deem it proper that the cost and maintenance of the troops must be borne by all my lands, and that the soldiery shall be assigned amongst them proportionally.¹⁶

But this time the Estates refused, characteristically preferring "to trust in God and wait patiently upon events". The Elector therefore proceeded to the extreme step of collecting a land tax of 180,000 Thaler by military execution. This action, taken without the consent of the Estates, was, as the nobility at once complained,

contrary to ancient custom, contrary to the constitutional laws, contrary to the fixed financial relations between the nobility and the towns, and contrary to the recent promises of the Elector. It [was] taking without consent and by force a greater and more unbearable amount in four months than even an irate enemy had ever demanded in a whole year.

In the recriminations which followed, it became clear that what troubled the nobles most was that they thought they were having to pay a little larger proportion of the tax than the towns. They complained that the Elector's officials did not assess the tax in the same ratio between nobility and towns as had been formerly agreed upon. In their selfishness they so magnified this picayune point that they lost sight of the really great and important danger that they were on the verge of losing altogether their constitutional right to grant taxes.¹⁷

It was with these means that the Great Elector was in part able to raise the army with which he won a year later his first great field victory, the three-days' battle of Warsaw (July 28-30, 1656). In this battle, for the first time, troops from Brandenburg, Prussia, and Cleves-Mark fought side by side under a single flag and a single leader for a single, common purpose—the strengthening of the dynastic power of the Hohenzollern family. This new army of nearly 10,000, which strikingly embodied the new Brandenburg-Prussian state, had borne gloriously its first baptism of fire.

During the remaining years of the Northern War, Brandenburg was forced to contribute on an average nearly 500,000 *Th.* a year for the support of the new army. In East Prussia, Cleves, and his other provinces the Great Elector exerted an equally heavy financial pres-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 318-338; *Prot. u. Rel.*, pp. 92-135.

sure in ways which cannot here be described, but which called forth loud and bitter protests from the Estates.¹⁸ With the revenues which he thus raised he was able to recruit and equip in the course of the Northern War an efficient field army of over 27,000 men, not including the 4000 men serving in the garrisons. With this army he not only successfully repelled invasion in the latter part of the war, but was able at last, with the aid of duplicity, to shake off the hated Polish overlordship in East Prussia and to secure the recognition of his own sovereignty there.

The Great Elector's excuse for imposing such taxes and creating such an army had been the "unavoidable necessity" caused by a war not of his own making. When the war was over and the peace of Oliva had been signed, the Estates in each of his lands expected that he would follow the example of his predecessors in disbanding his forces until they were reduced again to the scanty garrison and body-guard troops customary before the Northern War. But the Great Elector now had no such intentions. "I have become convinced", he wrote, "that I owe the preservation of my position and my territory to God, and next to God, to my army." And in the interesting secret letter of advice which he drew up for his son in 1667 he declared:

¹⁸ Before the Northern War the military land tax (*Kontribution*) had averaged only about 300,000 *Th.* a year and had come mainly from the central and western provinces. During the Northern War it rose rapidly and East Prussia also had to contribute its full share. The amounts of the military tax from the different provinces may be seen from the following table:

Year	Brandenburg	Cleves-Mark	Minden-Ravensberg	Halberstadt	Pomerania	E. Prussia	Total
	<i>Th.</i>	<i>Th.</i>	<i>Th.</i>	<i>Th.</i>	<i>Th.</i>	<i>Th.</i>	<i>Th.</i>
1653	150,000	50,000	60,000	36,667	50,000		346,667
1654	75,000	50,000	60,000	36,667	107,798	6,000	335,465
1655	360,000	250,000	60,400	50,000	118,402	600,000	1,438,802
1656	540,000	250,000	84,400	51,045	84,546	600,000	1,609,991
1657	600,000	250,000	128,400	63,000	184,114	600,000	1,825,514
1658	531,000	250,000	128,400	117,617	406,031	600,000	2,033,048
1659	600,000	250,000	142,368	99,174	311,627	600,000	2,003,169
1660	360,000	250,000	142,368	99,174	220,763	300,000	1,372,305
Total . . .	3,216,000	1,600,000	806,336	553,344	1,483,281	3,306,000	10,964,961
% tax . .	29.5	14.6	7.0	5.0	13.5	30.4	100
% pop. .	32	13	7	4	10	34	100

The last two lines in the table show that the proportion of taxes contributed by each of the Elector's territories corresponded fairly equitably to the population in each. The figures given have been drawn from a variety of sources and in many cases are only approximate, but they have been checked up with the results reached by Wolters, *Die Zentralverwaltung des Heeres und der Steuern*, pp. 307, 575.

Alliances are good to be sure, but a force of one's own, on which one can more securely rely, is better. A ruler is treated with no consideration if he does not have Troops and means of his own. It is these, Thank God! which have made me "considerable" since the time that I began to have them; and I continually regret that at the beginning of my reign, to my great disadvantage I allowed myself to be dissuaded from them and against my wish followed other counsels.¹⁹

He had realized in the Northern War how dangerous "unpreparedness" is when one's neighbors are full of military activities. He saw that his subjects had become somewhat accustomed to the payment of military taxes. He saw that the time had come for maintaining by policy in time of peace, as a *standing army*, a part of the force which he had raised by necessity in time of war, as an active fighting army. Therefore, while disbanding more than half his forces, he still retained after the Northern War about 12,000 men, 5200 of whom were assigned to make more generous provision of defense of the garrisons, and the rest of whom were distinctly retained as a permanent field army. This is the true origin of the Prussian standing army.

In reducing his standing army to a peace footing after the Northern War the Great Elector still had to observe the utmost economy, for his lands were poor and he had not yet developed a large source of revenue for military purposes. Thus, the artillery, which on account of its large equipment in horses was one of the most expensive, though smallest, parts of the army, was wholly given up. The guns and gunners were redistributed again among the fortresses. This continued to be the practice throughout the Great Elector's reign. Only in time of war were the guns brought out again from the fortresses and mounted to form a temporary artillery division.²⁰

The Great Elector also reduced the number of officers, but not proportionally with the rest of the army. A large number of officers, instead of being dismissed altogether, were kept in his service by paying them "waiting money" (*Wartegeld*). They had no soldiers under them and no duties in time of peace. They were, in a sense, on temporary leave of absence. But if war broke out, they were bound by the terms of their "waiting money" to be ready to recruit new regiments or to take command of old troops, according as the Elector should direct. Thus the Great Elector assured for himself an adequate number of good, experienced, and trusted officers without the burden of actually supporting a correspondingly large number of common soldiers.

¹⁹ This interesting letter was first discovered and printed by Ranke, *Genesis des Preuss. Staates* (Leipzig, 1874), p. 508.

²⁰ Jany, *Die Alte Armee*, p. 56.

In time of peace also the Great Elector, with characteristic thrift, found means of turning his standing army to profitable uses. Soldiers were employed in digging the famous Frederick William canal connecting the Elbe with the Oder. In 1663 soldiers were conveniently used in transforming the Tiergarten into a pleasant park and suburb for Berlin. In the same year, when the Turks again became dangerous and the Emperor begged for help, the Great Elector was able to lend him 2000 troops—on condition that the Emperor should pay all the costs of their support.²¹

The Estates, however, were by no means reconciled to his retention of even a small standing army, and they did not believe that the rumors of war at all justified his continued forced collection of military taxes which had not been constitutionally granted. They protested loudly, but in vain. For after he had established his sovereignty in East Prussia, the Elector felt able to take a higher tone toward the Estates than in his helpless years at the beginning of his reign. His triumph over the Estates in East Prussia, in the course of which the leaders of the opposition, Roth and Kalckstein, were kidnapped and imprisoned, is well known.²² In Brandenburg, when a deputation of the Estates presented a list of grievances in 1666 he expressed himself sharply:

Deputies. We are sorely grieved that in matters touching the weal or woe of the land and entailing the loss of our property and our total ruin, you no longer call us together in the Diet to ask our advice.

Frederick William. Tie secret and weighty matters to a bell-rope by giving them to the Estates to deliberate over, indeed!

Deputies. It is with the greatest pain that we have seen how you have continued to levy 22,000 *Th.* a month, and done so as if it were a permanent tax.

Frederick William. I could wish that we lived with such neighbors that we could get along with less.

Deputies. The military taxes we have paid out of loyal love and devotion for so many years cause the decay of the towns and villages.

Frederick William. For the decay in the towns the town magistrates themselves are responsible. It is due to the inefficiency of their administration, which smells to heaven.

Deputies. We are also saddened at the order that recruiting is to be held in every town and village. It makes conditions of life so uncertain. Every one fears danger and suspects evil.

Frederick William. I am not a little displeased that my good intentions toward the welfare of my people are made a matter of fear and suspicion. If it were not for some people who are so clever that they

²¹ Convention of August 23, 1663, *Urk. u. Act.*, XI, 298.

²² For the details of "The Great Diet, 1661-1663", see *ibid.*, XV, 459-775; XVI, 1-425.

can hear grass growing, wrong impressions of your ruler's intentions would not be made.²³

A few days later, in words which sound very like those which Bismarck used two centuries later in his constitutional conflict with the Prussian legislature, the Great Elector declared to the Brandenburg deputies: "The burden of taxation in the present circumstances is unavoidable. It is necessary for our safety and welfare. Mere words and empty arguments in cases like this accomplish little or nothing."²⁴

At the same time the Elector began to devise, and eventually put into operation, a number of new military taxes which he hoped would afford him a steady revenue for the standing army, and yet which would not bear with such a direct and irritating pressure on the people as the old land-tax (*Kontribution*). The new taxes would also have the great advantage that their collection and administration would be mainly in the hands of the Elector's own personal officials, could be centralized at Berlin, and could be made in time more or less uniform for all his territories. One of the most objectionable features of the land-tax, from the Elector's point of view, was that its collection and administration were normally in the hands of the agents of the Estates. Among the new taxes was an excise (*Akzise*) on meat, grain, and beer; it was first used on a considerable scale in 1667 in the towns of Brandenburg, and later extended as a "general excise" into the Elector's other provinces.²⁵ During the war with Sweden, in his great necessity, he twice levied on all his lands, as an emergency war-tax, what may be described as a graduated income tax (*Kopfsteuer*). All his subjects were graded into 250 classes, ranging all the way from the Elector himself, who was taxed 1000 *Th.*, and his wife, who was assessed at 500, down through university professors and physicians who paid four thaler each, to day-laborers in small towns who contributed only a quarter of a thaler.²⁶ Its collection was exclusively in the hands of the Elector's military revenue collectors (*Steuerkommissare*) acting under orders

²³ Memorial of the Estates, July 1, 1666; the grievances of the Estates are given in summary, but Frederick William's autograph marginal notes are *verbatim*. *Urk. u. Act.*, X. 389-392.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 392 ff.

²⁵ The opposition to it was so strong in some of the provinces that its introduction into all the provinces was not accomplished till after the Great Elector's death in 1688. The best account of it is by Hugo Rachel, *Die Handels-, Zoll-, und Akzisepolitik Brandenburg-Preussens bis 1713* (*Acta Borussica*, Berlin, 1911), pp. 501-599.

²⁶ Edicts of January 20, 1677, and January 7, 1679, in Mylius, IV. v, nos. 1 and 2.

from the central war department (*Generalkriegskommissariat*) at Berlin. The Estates had nothing to do with it. It was another innovation which further undermined their power and correspondingly increased that of the Elector. It was uniform for all the lands and broke through the old existing medieval distinctions between town and country and between different social classes. After the close of the war with Sweden a small revenue was derived from a stamp-tax (*Stempelsteuer*) on all legal papers.²⁷ In order to secure means for building up a navy, the Elector levied after 1686 a tax (*Chargensteuer*) which somewhat resembled in principle the "first fruits" of the medieval church: every official on receiving a new office had to pay over to the government half the first year's salary.²⁸ Of the successful administration of these taxes, as well as of the relatively good organization, equipment, and discipline of the army itself, there is here no time to speak. But a word may be said as to its later growth and influence during the Great Elector's life-time.

During the wars with Louis XIV. and the Swedes (1672-1679), when he had to defend his lands over a very wide front from the Rhine to the Memel, Frederick William steadily increased his standing army until it reached in 1678 the maximum number of over 45,000 men, including all branches of the service.²⁹ This number was beyond his own means of support. It was only through the fortunate circumstance that he was able to secure considerable subsidies from his neighbors—363,800 *Th.* from Spain, 770,622 from the Dutch, and nearly a million from the Holy Roman Empire—that he was able to keep on foot a standing army of this size.

After the French-Swedish War had been brought to an end by peace in 1679, Frederick William again reduced his forces by somewhat more than one-half, just as he had done after the close of the Northern War, but he still retained a very respectable standing army of about 18,000 men. This remained the average size of the

²⁷ Edict of July 15, 1682; in Mylius, IV. v, Kap. iii, no. 1; by a misprint Mylius gives the date as 1685 instead of 1682.

²⁸ Edict of January 2, 1686; in Mylius, IV. v, Kap. ii, nos. 1-4.

²⁹ The strength of the different branches of the service, according to an official estimate of December 28, 1678, in the Zerbst Archives, quoted by Jany, *Die Alte Armee*, pp. 91-93, was as follows:

General Staff, comprising.....	184 men
Cavalry, 85 companies, comprising	9,764 "
Dragoons (mounted infantry), 29 companies.....	3,455 "
Infantry, 188 companies,	30,892 "
Artillery,	1,033 "
Total	45,328 "

army until the outbreak of the war which followed Louis XIV.'s invasion of the Palatinate, when it was increased again to 30,000. It made Brandenburg-Prussia, next to Austria, the strongest power in Germany and a highly prized ally in the War of the Spanish Succession.

The indirect effects of the standing army were perhaps even more important than the direct. As the army was one of the first institutions which embodied the unity and efficiency of the whole Brandenburg-Prussian state, in contrast with the weakness and corner-grocery attitude of the separate provinces, so the organs of financial administration which were developed for the army's support—the central war department (*Generalkriegskommissariat*),³⁰ the military revenue collectors (*Steuerkommissare*), the military budget (*Generaletat*), the war chest (*Kriegskasse*), and the army chest (*Generalfeldkriegskasse*)—soon came to form a centralized and efficient administrative service. This rapidly supplanted the various lax and decentralized agencies which had been managed by the Estates. The absolutistic officials of the Elector gradually took the place of the particularistic agents of the Estates. In many cases the Elector shrewdly adopted and transformed their agents into officials of his own.³¹ And the curious thing is that within a generation many of the families which had been loudest in their protests against the Great Elector's attacks on their so-called liberties were the very ones who made the most loyal and efficient members of the new Prussian bureaucracy.

To what extent, it may be asked, are the Great Elector and his standing army responsible for the Prussian militarism of to-day? Less, I believe, than is usually supposed. But this is a large question upon which I may not venture at this time to enter.

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³⁰ It is significant that it was the Northern War which led to the establishment of the first regular war department with authority over all the military forces in all the Elector's provinces (April 8, 1655). The head of this department, who at first was merely a member of the Privy Council assigned to look after military matters, speedily built up about himself a body of clerks and administrative boards which carried forward the work of centralizing and strengthening the military administration. The head of this department exercised some of the functions of a general staff, of a quartermaster-general, and of a treasury department. For an excellent discussion of the development of the office, see Wolters; *op. cit.*, pp. 80-145.

³¹ It was through a transformation of this kind that the modern *Landrat*, who represents the quintessence of Prussian conservatism and bureaucracy, came into existence. Cf. F. Gelpke, *Die Geschichtliche Entwicklung des Landratsamtes der Preussischen Monarchie* (Berlin, 1902); also Wolters, pp. 146-158.